

## Old Man in the Mountain Monument unveiled to the public

*By Art McGrath*

The pain the Old Man of the Mountain's collapse caused was alleviated somewhat in February with the unveiling of a \$4.8 million monument made of Vermont granite.

"That was one of the worst days of my life; this helps the hurt somewhat," said Dick Hamilton of Littleton, referring to May 3, 2003, when the centuries old stone crag collapsed. Hamilton is sometimes known as "Mr. White Mountains" because of the long association with tourism in the North Country. Every night Hamilton said "good night boss," to the stone profile on his way home from work in Lincoln at White Mountain Attractions. When he drove home May 2, 2003, the Old Man was hidden by mist.

Since the Old Man's collapse, Hamilton has been part of a search for a suitable monument. A search committee went through over 40 applications and chose the winner, designed by Shelley Bradbury and Ron Magers of Essex, Mass. Out of a panel of 40 applicants.

"This was the best of the designs submitted and the only one to use primarily granite," Hamilton said. "We were absolutely against using any other material. Many designs proposed using fiberglass, stainless steel or plastic."

The monument will be stretched along a quarter of a mile long path that will go from the current Old Man museum, near the parking lot of Cannon Mountain, to the shore of Profile Lake, where the old viewing area was located. At the entrance to the monument, where the path starts, there will be large granite stones on either side of the path, with turnbuckles on them, to honor the several generations of people who spent so much time trying to prevent the profile from collapsing.

The centerpiece of the monument will be five large slabs of granite ranging from 90 tons to 120 tons, all from Rock of Ages Quarry in Barre, Vt. When viewed from a certain angle, the five stones will line up to create the Old Man's profile, which visitors will be able to see when standing from a certain angle. The tallest stone will be 20 feet high, half the height of the original Old Man. At the right moment, drivers on Interstate 93 will also be able to look over and see the Profile for just a moment as the five large blocks line up.

"It will be just like before, when drivers were able to

look up and just for a moment see the Old Man," Hamilton said. According to Kurt Swenson, of Swenson Granite in Concord, the Barre quarry is the only place in North America with the ability to produce, lift, and transport stones of this size. The 120-ton stone will be the largest single stone ever quarried in North America, he said. "We wanted to use New Hampshire granite but it just wasn't possible," Swenson said. The stones will also be sculpted in Barre before being moved.

At the very end of the monument, where the current viewing area is located, there will be a series of "profilers" set up. These profilers will be large, thin metal structures aimed up at the exact spot on the crag where the symbol once could be seen. On the side of the structures will be pieces of various shaped metal, that when viewed from just the right angle will allow someone to see the profile back up of the face of Cannon Mountain once again.

A dedication of the monument is expected to be held on the five-year anniversary of the collapse – May 3, 2008, according to Maura Weston, chair of the Old Man of the Mountain Legacy Fund, a committee that has been raising funds for a monument. So far the Fund has raised \$800,000 for the project. The building of the monument is part of a public-private partnership between the state and the Legacy Fund, an arrangement that was finalized just before the unveiling of the monument.

The exact details of how much money the state will pay has yet to be determined but Department of Resources and Economic Development Commissioner George Bald praised the work of the Legacy Fund. "I appreciate the efforts of the Legacy Fund," Bald said. "The Old Man is a national treasure. Like Hamilton the day the Old Man fell was the worst day of my state career."

The day the state symbol fell was horrible for many, but the unveiling helped the pain of others as well. David Nielsen, of Gilmanton, was involved for many years in trying to preserve the Old Man, along with his father Niels Nielsen. In 1969, at age 11, David accompanied his father up the mountain to help fill in cracks that might let in moisture, make sure the turnbuckles that held the stones were solid and do any other work that might be needed. The project was a family project and working on choosing a monument brought

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